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POMONA.*

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THE PROLOGUE.

THERE was an apple-tree in full bloom the day the child was born, and that was why she was called Pomona. Her father, Owen Ludlow, had retired from the agitation prevailing in the bright, little house that still bore the marks of the newly married plainly about it, for his wedding day was barely a year ago, and had betaken himself to the small room that was called his studio, and had nearly spoilt a pretty sketch on his easel by an unaccountable unsteadiness in his hand, and so had given up the attempt, and had stood looking out at the window, imagining that he was taking artistic stock of the pink and white glories of the tree outside, and of the sunshine dappling the green moss on its trunk, and of the cluster of white narcissus underneath. Really, he was quite unconscious of what he was looking at, all his senses being concentrated in the next room with his young wife; but, all the same, that day was inseparably connected in his mind with apple blossom, and apple blossom with that day, as also the long soft note of a nightingale, which was interrupted by a knock at the door and the entrance of the doctor to announce that he was the father of a little girl. Whenever he heard that long note in years to come, he listened also involuntarily for the knock at the door and the old doctor's voice.

A few days later the blossom was falling softly on the mossy path and the box-edging, when Owen Ludlow went out to pick some of those white narcissus to put in his dead wife's hand. It was very sad. There was the greatest sympathy bestowed on the young widower, whose honeymoon was hardly over, whose wedding presents were still almost intact, time and housemaids'

dusters not having yet wrought their usual work of devastation. In the wardrobe, that still opened stiffly from newness, hung the pretty trousseau dresses, some of them hardly worn; and there were yet unexplored corners in the hearts both of husband and wife, feelings unknown to each other, sympathies untasted, antipathies—who can tell?—untouched on; hundreds of circumstances in which one had not seen the other, and could have no idea how he or she would act. For example, she had never seen him in the exasperating circumstances of spring-cleaning, the newly-married house being all spick and span when they came into it last May, and the general upheaval and convulsion, that comes with the spring-time into all well-regulated households, having been postponed till after Pomona's arrival. It is not easy to find an equivalent situation of trial in which Owen Ludlow might have seen his wife; but undoubtedly during the first few years of married life there must be continual surprises, and new lights thrown on character and conduct, which may be pleasing or the reverse.

Well, sad as it was to lose all the sweet possibilities, it must be taken into account that they escaped all the bitter as well; and it was something to part without a single breath to ruffle the course of the stream of true love, over which the honeymoon shone so brightly to the very end. A sorrow that is quite free from remorse is almost a happiness when the first anguish is over.

But it was not to be expected that Owen Ludlow should feel this that first evening, when the room above was empty with that emptiness only a funeral can leave, and the mournful, little

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party of guests had departed, and he sat in the dining-room, that was pervaded with the sickly smell of black gloves and funeral flowers, and tried to re-arrange his life's programme. His wife's work-basket was still on the little table in the window, with the needle stuck into the baby's shirt she had been hemming not a fortnight ago. The basket itself had been a wedding present from some school-girl friend, and each little working implement had some pleasant association to the young wife. Owen felt, even in his own great grief, a little extra, pitiful feeling for all these simple associations snapped so abruptly. Who would remember now if Bessie or Rose had given the small thimble, or how little Dolly made that pincushion with her own hands? He put them all almost tenderly away, as if they, too, could feel their bereavement; and he was quite glad of the trifling occupation to distract him for a moment from the distasteful task of making up his mind as regarded the future.

There was the baby to be thought of—Pomona. He had quite made up his mind that she should be called Pomona, though the old nurse had declared it to be an outlandish name, and 'Why shouldn't she be called after her poor dear Ma?' Not that, of all other names; it would have been sacrilege to him to call any one Katharine Ludlow—above all, such an odd, little, red object as the nurse had exhibited with pride; just as it was an insult to pretend to find a likeness between mother and child, as the servants always did in very audible tones when they thought he was within hearing. And besides, the name, Pomona, would always be suggestive to him not only of the child's birthday—when, as I have said, the apple blossom was in full beauty outside the window—but of all that short year of happiness. The little home was called 'the Orchards,' not on the *lucus a non lucendi* principle, as houses in the suburbs are named 'the Cedars,' 'the Chestnuts,' and so on, regardless of the vegetable growth in the little front gardens. But in this case the house was literally surrounded by orchards, and could only be reached by a path under the gnarled branches of apple-trees; and tall men had to look out for their hats as they entered, and blossom fell like snow on the coffin as it was carried out.

It was the blossom season when they first came home after their short wedding tour. It seemed almost unbelievably sweet and idyllic that first evening, as they sat at tea with a great bowl of cowslips in the middle of the table, and Katharine taking her place for the first time as mistress of the house, with a pretty air of importance. The sweet May twilight crept upon them as they sat lingering over their meal, and suddenly, from a bush close outside, a nightingale's liquid note trembled on the fragrant air. Only a year ago!

But it was not only in the spring-time, but all the year round, that the apple-trees seemed connected with their happiness. To one of the twisted boughs he had fastened the hammock where so many of the hot sultry summer afternoons were spent, with the bees drowsily humming round, and only an occasional twitter breaking the summer silence of the birds. Under another tree, the little afternoon tea-table used to be set; and day after day they noticed how the little green apples grew and rounded and yellowed and blushed, till at last the whole

orchard was full of red and russet and golden fruit, a garden of the Hesperides, at which the school-boys cast envious eyes in passing, eyes which Katharine could never resist, generally responding to them with an apronful of apples, which naturally doubled the number of envious eyes on the following day.

And when they were all gathered and stored away, the orchard was yet lovely with the yellow and brown foliage thinning on the trees, and the fragrance of the dead leaves on the grass, and the soft emerald mosses and gray lichens showing on the crooked trunks as they had not done in summer-time. And at Christmas there was mistletoe on the tree in the corner; and he picked some from the frosty boughs, which made a clear sharp-cut trellis-work against the cold, pale blue sky; and he kissed his wife's sweet face, pretending that there was need of mistletoe privileges to excuse such a very ordinary occurrence. And on New-year's Day came the snow, turning the orchard into fairyland, with every twig and tiny branch outlined in purest white. And now, again, came blossoming-time, only the flowers fell on a coffin carried out. And that brought him back to the empty present, and the necessity for arranging for the future.

'Let me have the poor baby,' his mother had sent word, being too much of an invalid to come to her bereaved son; and her husband had scrupulously delivered the message, though even the deep melancholy of the occasion could not prevent the exchange of a half-comical glance between father and son as he did so.

Mrs Ludlow was a person of whom poor people would say—unconsciously conveying, as they often do, a very real fact—that she enjoyed bad health. Her health was her one interest. I do not know what she would have done if some day she had realised the fact that she was quite as well and strong as the majority of other people, that there was no reason why she should not get up at a reasonable time and dress in a reasonable way, discarding dressing-gowns or tea-gowns—which, by the way, to the uninitiated seem only a glorified form of dressing-gown—and eat a reasonable meal, and go out into the air and sunshine, and be of some use to somebody or something in the world.

But she never did realise the fact; and perhaps, after all, it was not a fact, and she really was too frail and sensitive and delicate to take a share, even the smallest, in God's great, active, workaday world. But the idea of her with a baby was comic even to a broken heart, and to her indulgent husband, who believed implicitly in every ache and pain and fainting and palpitation. A baby that cried! Even at this early age it was capable of a cat-like sound of considerable volume and great persistence, and no doubt would develop into much louder performances as it grew older. A baby who might have fits, or fearful difficulties over teething, or whooping-cough, or other distressing infantile complaints, encroaching on Mrs Ludlow's prerogative of being the one invalid in the house. A child, who, after babyhood was passed, would be romping and fidgeting all over the place, tumbling about, injuring itself or other things of more importance; for, after her own health, old china was Mrs Ludlow's special hobby. All this flashed

through Mr Ludlow's mind as he delivered the message with a little twinkle in one corner of his eyes, that were so full of sincere sympathy with his son's misfortune.

'Thank my mother very much,' Owen had answered; 'but I think I can make another arrangement about the child.'

And his father, with eager acquiescence, said: 'Yes, yes! to be sure; yes, yes! of course,' in a nervous way he had; and fortunately did not inquire what the other arrangement might be, seeing that Owen himself had no idea.

Now, as he sat by himself—how much by himself!—that evening cogitating, the baby seemed to him almost the worst part of his misfortunes. The clergyman of the parish, as he bade him good-bye, had pressed his hand and murmured something about his not being left without a little spark of comfort—that the baby would be an interest and happiness to him; and Owen tried to respond fittingly, and not shock the reverend gentleman by expressing a wish that it were allowable to drown babies like superfluous kittens, and by declaring that if he were to look for comfort and happiness in the future to that little red object encased in flannel, the prospect was a poor one indeed.

He had an overwhelming longing to get away, out of all the associations that had been so sweet, and were now so bitter—to go where he and Katharine had never been together—to live a life that she could not have shared—to bury himself entirely in some work that would occupy heart and mind and eyes and brain, leaving no room for the loving and thinking and watching and listening that seemed all his being, and to have been turned by Death's ruthless hand into keen and constant suffering. The gaping desolate void must be filled somehow, if he was to live—no matter what rubbish was shot into it, it must be filled before he could begin building up the edifice of his life again.

But the baby seemed to prevent this entire cutting himself adrift; he could not—thank Heaven!—take it with him, racketing about in bachelor's quarters at home or abroad; and he remembered fearful stories of children placed out to nurse being neglected and ill-treated; and, for Katharine's sake, he would not wish this to be the case, any more than he would have allowed a small kitten that her gentle hand had fondled, or a robin that she had rescued from the snow and coaxed back into impertinent bright-eyed life, to suffer, now she was gone.

He could not detect in his feelings any of that parental affection which he understood sprang into existence on the birth of a baby; he sought in vain for any of the foolish admiration that makes young parents so ridiculous; he did not consider it at all a wonderful or even interesting production of nature—certainly the most prejudiced beholder could not call it even decently good-looking. He went up more than once to look at it as it lay asleep, and he tried to feel a kindling of warmth at his heart, the very faintest throb of fatherly love or pride; and the nurse sobbed aloud at the touching sight, and told the other servants, 'Twere enough to break one's heart to see him so wrope up in the child as couldn't tear himself away now!'.

But Owen Ludlow turned away each time with

a deeper conviction that it was no use trying to fill the great void Katharine had left with that dreadful little object up-stairs. But he had not got any more forward in arranging his future plans; and it was almost a relief to be distracted from the consideration of them by the sound of wheels in the road outside, wheels that stopped at the white gate, by which a path under the apple-trees led up to the house. It was nine o'clock by this time, and on that unfrequented road the sound of wheels at that hour was unusual; but perhaps it might be the carrier from the county town.

If Owen Ludlow had not been only too willing to be distracted, he might not have noticed the interruption; but as it was, he hailed it with pleasure, were it only that just for a minute it silenced the nightingale outside, which seemed to be using all its arts to tear and harrow the husband's heart with exquisitely sad sweet memories. He got up and looked out into the orchard, where the stars gave a dim light; and he saw a tall woman coming up the path, and a shine of carriage-lamps at the gate behind her. It was a lady; even in the semi-darkness he could see by the way she walked that she was not one of the villagers; but there was nothing familiar to him in the figure, though he quickly ran over in his mind all the friends of himself or his wife who this could possibly be.

'A lady, sir, to see you,' the servant announced a minute later. 'I told her as you was very much occupied, and I didn't think as you'd care to see no one; but she said she would not detain you many minutes.'

'Did she give any name?'

'No: she said!—'

But the dimensions of the Orchards were so small that, as the servant stood holding the dining-room door in her hand, any one at the front door must be standing almost immediately behind her; and the visitor at this point undertook her own introduction, and, passing the girl, entered the room, saying, 'I must apologise for intruding at such a time; but I have something of importance to speak about, and this may be my only opportunity.'

She was tall, above the general height of women; and the effect of height was increased by the long straight cloak she wore, and the way she carried her head, which made Owen Ludlow feel as if he were shorter, though in fact he was not.

He bowed rather awkwardly, and drew forward a chair for her; while the servant with some reluctance closed the door, being naturally anxious to find out who this strange and late visitor might be.

'And quite the lady, as one could see with half an eye; and never been here before, and come in a carriage and pair. Didn't we ought to ask the coachman if he wouldn't take something, Mary Jane, as may have come a long way?'

But on reconnoitring, they found there was some one else—another lady in the carriage, which damped their hospitable intentions; and they also discovered that the carriage that looked so imposing in the dark with the lamps was only a fly from the station hotel at Courtlington, five miles off—'as it ain't no good wasting good beer on a flyman.'

But meanwhile in the little dining-room a

strange proposal was being made to Owen Ludlow. The lady had put up her veil, and showed a face that was almost lovely, only it had such an unhappy, dissatisfied look in the gray eyes and drooping lines of the mouth.

'You will hardly know my name,' she said; 'but I was at school with your wife, and she would have remembered Marjory Grant very well.'

'I remember her speaking of you,' he said.

'I am Lady Lester now, and I have been married eight years.'

Memories were coming back to Owen Ludlow's mind of his wife talking of her pretty school-fellow, who had married directly she left school—he fancied she had said a man a good deal older than herself. He remembered stories of school-girl pieces of fun in which this Marjory Grant had been ringleader, full of wild spirits, and up to any amount of innocent mischief and harmless adventure. But perhaps this was some other girl, for this sad-faced Lady Lester did not seem capable of madcap frolic.

'I have never seen Katharine since we parted at school; but when I heard of—your loss, it brought it all back to me so vividly, that as I was staying one night at Courtlington, I thought I must come, even at the risk of intruding on your sorrow, to tell you how much I loved her, and how sorry I am.'

'Thank you,' was all he could answer as he pressed the hand she stretched out to him, for the tears in her eyes made his grow dim and choked his voice.

'But this is not all,' she went on. 'They told me the baby was living. I have none; and I want you to let me have hers.—Wait a bit!' She stopped his reply. 'Is the baby (a girl, isn't it?)—is she very, very dear to you? Is she a great comfort to you? Because, if she is, I won't say a word more. But if not—for something in Owen Ludlow's face reassured her—if not, I want you to let me have her. I don't mean merely to bring up for you, but altogether—entirely—to be my own little girl.'

'But'—he began hesitatingly.

'Yes; I know,' she went on eagerly. 'No doubt it is impossible; but just let me put my case fairly before you decide against me. You know, or perhaps you don't know, that my husband, Sir Hugh Lester, was a widower when I married him, with two boys; so your little girl won't be a great heiress if you let me have her. She will only have the little I have of my own. My husband is all that is good and kind; I have not a word to say against him' (But perhaps a little sigh that filled up a pause here might have told a little tale, if Owen Ludlow could have interpreted it)—'and the boys are dear fellows, and as fond of me as if I were their own mother, but—I have none of my own.—Well'—she went on, after another pause, eloquent with the unsatisfied longing and yearning that perhaps only a childless woman could sympathise with, which certainly Owen Ludlow could not appreciate, who would have given all the babies in the world for the one life he had lost—'well, my husband is quite willing I should adopt a child; he is most indulgent to all my whims and fancies; he took endless trouble to get a dog he thought would please me; my horses are the envy of all my

friends; he spends fabulous sums on orchids for me; he is quite glad when I express the faintest wish for any costly luxury that he can get for me. He only stipulates about the child that it shall not be picked up anywhere out of the mire, from among waifs and strays, of unknown parentage, who may inherit bad tendencies of mind and body, disease or vice.—He is very sensible and very good, you see,' she went on. 'It is all open and above-board as far as he is concerned; and it can do no one any wrong, as, of course, the boys will inherit all the property, and my (?) little girl will only have what I can give her. It is no case of palming off an heir or altering the inheritance in any way, as one reads of in books, but just to give me a dear little girl to love, and make me happy, with my husband's full consent and approval.'

She was silent now; but her great soft eyes looked so pleadingly at Owen Ludlow that he still seemed to hear her earnest voice entreating for what was of so little value to him, for what he had only that evening been realising was an embarrassment and a burden. And then before his mind came the memory of a letter from an old artist friend of his, received a week or two back, and not thought of during all this time of agitation and anguish, telling of his speedy departure for the Rocky Mountains, where he was going in search of health and scenery. 'Ah, Ludlow,' he finished up, 'if only you were not married and done for, and could strike your tents and come along with me, what high times we might have!'

Lady Lester's eager eyes detected the signs of wavering in his face. 'You shall never regret that you have trusted her to me,' she said. 'I think Katharine would have liked me to have her baby—above all, if she could have known how sorely I want something all my own to love and care for.'

'You will let me consider the matter,' he said; 'it is too important a thing to decide in a hurry.'

'Of course,' she answered.—'of course. But—if it is to be so, is there any object in delay? I mean, if you do not mind—my husband does not—that she shall bear my name, and be supposed to be my own child; and it would be best, I thought, if you would let me take her away with me to-night. My maid is waiting outside in the carriage; she is used to children, and can quite take care of her till we get home, and can find a regular nurse for her. And besides, I am only staying one night at Courtlington, and am on my way to Weymouth, where my husband will join me later on. He is yachting with the boys. He will be at Southampton to-day, and I will telegraph to him at once what I have done.'

But it would take too long to recapitulate all the arguments Lady Lester put forth in support of her plea, while, all the time, another advocate within himself was urging the relief it would be to know that Katharine's baby was happily and safely provided for, and himself free to go clear away from all associations.

Honestly, when he analysed his feeling for the baby, it was scarcely as deep and warm as what he felt for many of his wife's possessions—the dresses she had worn, the rings he had kissed on

her dainty fingers, the lace that had lain soft and warm round her neck; and he would not pretend to more feeling than he could truthfully detect in the heart that seemed buried in his wife's new-made grave. So, at the end of half an hour, the old nurse, nodding in her chair by the side of the bassinette, was startled by the apparition of a tall lady standing there, looking down at the baby with a look of such delight and pride as the old monthly nurse in all her wide experience had never seen but on the face of newly-made mothers.

'My own little girl!' she said as she drew back the flannel from its head with fingers that seemed trembling to snatch the baby up and satisfy with kisses the hungry look on the lips and in the loving eyes.

'A sweet, pretty lady too!' the nurse imparted to the other servants when she was gone, though she did not think it necessary to impart any share of the sovereign that was slipped into her hand at parting; 'and, as far as I could make out, some kin to the poor dear that's gone, and favoured her a bit in features, if I weren't mistaken. Anyhow, she were terrible set on having the baby, and would have took it off there and then; only the master, he wouldn't agree to that nohow, and 'twere plain to see he didn't half like to let it go, being that wrop up in it, natural like. So it was settled as it were to be all ready by the day after to-morrow, when her ladyship's own maid would come over and fetch the precious lamb. Yes, 'twere her ladyship, sure enough! though I can't mind the name as the master called her, and never heard tell as the missis come of such high folk, though she were a born lady, poor dear, as ever were. She asked all sorts of questions about the bottles and milk and how much was to be give at a time. She weren't one of them as thinks they knows better than an old woman as has had to do with babies afore they was born or thought of.'

Not all Lady Lester's blandishments would induce Owen Ludlow to agree to her carrying off the baby then and there. Time must be allowed for Sir Hugh to be communicated with, and a letter received from him fully confirming all that Lady Lester had said of his willingness to adopt the child. And on one other point Owen Ludlow was determined, though Lady Lester demurred, and though, after all, when he came to think of it afterwards, what did it really signify to him what name the child should bear, when he was never likely to hear or see anything more of her? and this point was that the child should be named 'Pomona.' It was unreasonable, he felt, to insist upon this; but it was a slight salve to his conscience, though he was hardly conscious that it required salving, or that it gave him the slightest uneasiness; but it made him feel less weakly acquiescent to make some difficulty, even a childishly unreasonable one.

'It is not a very pretty name,' Lady Lester said; 'and I am afraid Sir Hugh may not like it; but it has the advantage of being uncommon; and if you really wish it so much, of course it shall be so. I will telegraph to Sir Hugh the first thing to-morrow, and you will hear from him the following morning.'

So just for one more day, Owen Ludlow heard the baby's cry from the room up-stairs and the

sound of the rocking-chair on the floor, and saw the old nurse pottering up and down under the apple-tree, with the sunlight through the branches falling on the soft white bundle in her arms, and a stray blossom dropping now and then. Perhaps that day he felt something more nearly approaching the paternal sentiment than he had ever done before, such is the contrariness of human nature; and once he found himself hoping that Sir Hugh's reply might not be favourable, and that he might, after all, have to take the baby Pomona into the calculations of his future life. But the next morning brought a hearty, manly letter from Sir Hugh, fully endorsing all that his wife had said, and thanking Owen Ludlow for agreeing to a plan that would so largely contribute to his wife's happiness.

And soon afterwards Lady Lester arrived with a responsible-looking nurse, and carried off the baby, with profuse expressions of gratitude to Owen Ludlow, and liberal tips to the servants; and when the carriage had driven away, and he turned back up the orchard path, it seemed as if he were returning from another funeral, or rather as if the funeral of two days before had been completed, and the baby buried with her mother; and the house seemed emptier than ever.

He gave a little gasp, as if it caught his breath, when, a few days later, he saw in a paper the announcement among the births, 'On May 30th, at Weymouth, the wife of Sir Hugh Lester of a daughter.'

But he was in the Rockies, and beyond the reach of English newspapers, when six months later, there was an account of the terrible railway accident in Scotland in which Sir Hugh Lester's two sons lost their lives; nor did he see the announcement, the following year, of the death of the baronet himself.

SOME VILLAINS OF FICTION, AND THEIR FATES.

WHILE a great deal has been written on the subject of the heroes and heroines of fiction, comparatively little notice has been taken of its Villains—a neglect, no doubt, richly merited. And yet one is tempted to think that many a favourite novel with its villain eliminated would prove dull reading enough. There is little room for the old-fashioned conventional villain in the new school of fiction, which substitutes for plot and thrilling story an elaborate analysis of character. In dealing, too, with the lives of everyday people, the melodramatic scoundrel would be out of place. Hence his absence from the pages of Miss Austen's works, in which the quiet country pursuits of our forefathers, while George III. was king, are so vividly described. It is therefore to the narrative authors of the romantic or realistic schools that we must turn to find the villain without alloy.

One might divide the rogues of fiction into certain classes, such as the hypocritical, the gentlemanly, the blood-thirsty, and so forth. Sir Walter Scott has several types of rogues—the learned rogue, like Rashleigh Osbaldistone; the unscrupu-

lous and scheming lawyer, like Glossin in 'Guy Mannering'; the wild and lawless rogue, like Dirk Hatteraick, the Dutch smuggler captain. In some novels we find the villain claiming no small part of our sympathy, and Scott confessed that his rogue always, in spite of him, turned out his hero. Poetic justice, however, is generally meted out to his evil characters, and many of them come to violent ends. Richard Varney, on his capture, after the murder of the Countess of Leicester—disclaiming to drag on the remainder of his life a degraded outcast, and not wishing that his fate should make a holiday to the vulgar herd—swallowed some strong poison he was wont to carry about his person, and was found dead in his cell—the habitual expression of sneering sarcasm still on his face. His accomplice, the ungainly Anthony Foster, perished miserably in the cell whither he had fled to escape arrest, forgetting the key of the spring-lock by which alone his egress could be effected. Dirk Hatteraick, the accomplice of Glossin in kidnapping Henry Bertram, and the murderer of Meg Merrilies, hanged himself in the condemned ward of the jail, which had likewise witnessed the death of Glossin at the same hands. The unprincipled Lord Dalgarno, on his way to fight the duel with Nigel Olifaunt at Camlet Moat, was shot by Colepepper, or one of his ruffians, in Enfield Chase; while the Alsatian Captain himself did not survive the fierce attack of Richard Monipplies. One of the most interesting of Scott's characters is Rashleigh Osbaldistone, with his learning and his want of moral principle—the clever man of that country where clever men were scarce. Nevertheless, he is a knave, and, as a reward for his treason, perishes at the hand of Rob Roy, with the hatred of his cousin Francis strong within him, even in the moment of death. Jobson, the rascal attorney—a very favourite type with Scott, as with Dickens—had his name struck off the list of attorneys, and was reduced to poverty and contempt.

For a mind such as Thackeray's the study of evil had a certain fascination, and the character of his rogues being always carefully drawn, we see them as they are actually to be found in life—rather weak than wicked, vain and selfish more often than malignant. Any good which may be found in them he never fails to bring out. Barry Lyndon is a type of the adventurous scoundrel—not without certain redeeming features—dear to the heart of Fielding and Smollett. The son of a man of fashion, Barry was possessed of many accomplishments. He had a quick ear and a fine voice; he stepped a minuet gravely and gracefully, and was unrivalled at a hornpipe and a jig. His reading consisted exclusively of novels. After a round of adventures, in which he exhibits almost every vice save that of cowardice, he passes the latter end of his life in the Fleet Prison. Thackeray had a horror of gambling, and its evil effects form the moral of many of his tales. One example is to be found in the history of Mr Deuceace, the son, more sinned against than sinning, of the Earl of Crabs. His miserable fate is not rendered less pathetic by being described in the vernacular of Jeames Yellowplush—seated, shabby and unkempt, with

a poorly-dressed, ill-used woman by his side, on a bench in the Bois de Boulogne as the Earl and his bride drive past him without recognition. Of Thackeray's other more or less unprincipled characters, Lord Steyne is a striking example. A meaner but equally unprincipled character was Sir Pitt Crawley, who died at the good old age of fourscore. Barnes Newcome is the picture of the hypocritical rogue, outwardly irreproachable, of whom Dickens has given us so many examples. Of his fate the novelist says: 'My impression is that he married again, and it is my fervent hope that his present wife bullies him'—a wish the reader must cordially reciprocate.

No writer has a more plentiful supply of villains of all kinds than Dickens. Many of his characters are meant to exemplify different vices—as, for instance, unscrupulous selfishness in Jonas Chuzzlewit; or hypocrisy in Uriah Heep and Pecksniff; or, again, miserliness and its effects in Ralph Nickleby. Some of his figures are undoubtedly melodramatic, as Sir Mulberry Hawk or Carker; the gentleman rogue is one of the least happy of his portraits. Grotesquely horrible figures, such as Quilp, appealed strongly to his imagination, and have never been more powerfully depicted. Most of his rogues meet with the just reward of their deeds, as became the moral purpose of his books. Jonas Chuzzlewit, after attempting to poison his old father Anthony, and after murdering Montagu Tigg, himself takes poison as he is being carried off to jail. The first word he had been taught to spell was 'gain,' and the second 'money.' Gashford, the Secretary to Lord George Gordon—who imposes on the credulity of his master, and prompts the rioters to burn the Warren, where Geoffrey Haredale lived—also commits suicide. The villain Rudge, the father of Barnaby, came to the gallows. Ralph Nickleby took his own life—a moral to all such as are of a hard and grasping nature—he had torn a rope from one of the old trunks, and hanged himself on an iron hook immediately below the trap-door in the ceiling to which his son had looked so often in childish terror fourteen years ago.

The description of Fagin in Newgate awaiting execution is among the most thrilling in the pages of fiction; the face of the old Jew, retaining no human expression but rage and terror, haunts us as that of Quilp or Quasimodo. Hardly less terrible is the scene of Bill Sikes's death there in Jacob's Island, 'where the buildings are the dirtiest; and the vessels on the rivers blackest with dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built, low-roofed houses.' From the parapet of such a house it was that he fell in his effort to escape his pursuers, five-and-thirty feet into Folly Ditch, followed even to death by his faithful dog. The railway engine, employed as an instrument of fate, lends a tragic interest to the death of the smiling villain Carker with his white and glistening teeth. He uttered a shriek as he looked upon the engine, and 'saw the red eyes beared and dim in the daylight close upon him—was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill that spun him round and round, and struck him limb from limb, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air.' Rogue Riderhood in 'Our Mutual Friend'

perishes in a struggle with Bradley Headstone, near Plashwater Bridge. Both were found lying under the ooze and scum, behind one of the rotting gates of the lock. Quilp, the almost inhuman dwarf of Tower Hill, drowned himself as he was on the point of being arrested for felony—an appropriate ending to a life of moral and physical squalor.

Of Dickens's less malignant characters, Squeers, with his one eye, and forehead villainously low, adds the theft of a title-deed to his ill treatment of schoolboys, and is transported. Uriah Heep and Steerforth's valet Littimer are consistent hypocrites, till we lose sight of them in prison as No. 27 and No. 28—Uriah, the 'umblest person going, suffering the penalties of the law for fraud, forgery, and conspiracy—a deep plot for a large sum; while the valet expiates the robbing of his young master the night before they were going abroad. That arch-hypocrite Pecksniff lingers on shabby and out-at-elbows with drink, his worst enemy.

The fiction of half a century or so ago produced such a plentiful supply of highwaymen, cracksmen, and other heroes of the Newgate Calendar, that Thackeray exclaimed, 'The public will hear of nothing but rogues.' Fielding had described the adventures of Jonathan Wild, and now Jack Sheppard was made the hero of a tale. Dickens produced 'Oliver Twist,' and Bulwer-Lytton a series of stories in which the harshness of the criminal law and various other social grievances were illustrated in the careers of such as Paul Clifford. Some of his rogues come to very melodramatic ends. Gawtre, the false coiner in 'Night and Morning,' is a vivid picture of a man well educated and full of animal spirits, suffering for another man's crime, and at war with society. He is shot in attempting to escape from the Paris police—falling from the parapet of the house with a groan or rather howl of rage, despair, and agony, which appalled even the hardest on whose ear it came. Lord Lilburne, in many respects more guilty than Gawtre, escapes the outward retribution which overtakes crime; the novelist's idea being, that if vice is to be punished it must be from within. 'The Lilburnes of this hollow world are not to be pelted with the soft roses of poetical justice.' The brutal ruffian Houseman—whose only redeeming trait is the love of his daughter—is contrasted with the scholarly Eugene Aram, who yet is led to commit murder; showing once again that intellect and morality may in some instances be divorced. Houseman, in spite of his crimes, died in his bed without violence, having maintained himself by dressing flax. His life, however, was several times attempted by the mob; and when he died, his body was buried secretly at dead of night. Arbaces, the wily Egyptian priest, who crushed all who stood in his path in the 'Last Days of Pompeii,' was himself crushed in that supreme convulsion of nature by the shattering of the tall column that supported the bronze statue of Augustus.

Among Wilkie Collins's rogues one of the most interesting is Count Fosco in 'The Woman in White.' He was compounded of two almost distinct individualities. On one side of his character he is vain, fond of music, and of pet animals—white mice, a cockatoo, and a couple of canaries

—on the other, the calm conspirator with the cold glitter in his unfathomable gray eyes. As a definite moral ending was expected by the public, the novelist tells us how his body was discovered in the Morgue at Paris. In 'Armada,' the villainy of Dr Bashwood is cast in the shade by that of the would-be poisoner, Miss Gwilt, who puts an end to her own life, on the failure of her scheme, in Bashwood's sanatorium.

Charles Reade generally employs a principal and a subsidiary rogue of a more or less conventional type to show off the charms of the heroine and the resources of his virile hero to the best advantage. Thus we have Woodlaw and Wylie in 'Foul Play,' Richard Hardie and Skinner, and many others who suffer the just reward of their deeds. John Meadows, with the cool head and iron will in his search for wealth and respectability, nevertheless incurs a charge of theft; but in illustration of the principle of the book—'It is Never too Late to Mend'—shows promise of repentance and a hope of better things in the new land whither he sails with little Hannah and his old mother of threescore years and ten. The more despicable villain Crawley, left to his own resources, practises at the County Courts in his old neighbourhood, and drinks with all his clients, who are of the lowest imaginable order. Sir Charles Pomander belongs to the 'bold, bad Baronet' type of character; and the persecutor of 'Peg Woffington,' rich, handsome, and witty, with a hard head, a tough stomach, and no heart at all, has many points of resemblance with the Sir Hargrave Pollexfen of 'Sir Charles Grandison' or the Lovelace of 'Clarissa Harlowe.' Dickens's similar character, Sir John Chester, is killed in the duel with his enemy, Geoffrey Haredale. Less enviable, perhaps, was the fate of Pomander condemned for eight years to drag the chain of a life from which all pleasure had gone out.

THE BURDEN OF ISABEL.*

CHAPTER XXXV.—'HE THAT *will* BE RICH!'

GEORGE SUFFIELD, the elder, arrived in Lancashire early in the evening, and drove home at once to Holdsworth Hall. His son, he found, was away—had been away, Tummas said, since ever 'th' mester' had gone yesterday. He had left no word with Tummas where he had gone ('Nay,' grunted Tummas, 'Mester George doan't trust me wi' nought; he believes sae much i' th' black fellow!'), so that Mr Suffield had no resource but to wait, with what patience he could muster, for his return, or for the morning.

He slept ill, and rose betimes, while it was yet dark, and went to the works. The air was already filled with the laboured breathing of the engines and the whirl of bobbins and clatter of looms. It did him good to hear these sounds, and it made him proud, more than all the mumble and gossip, the speeches and the 'Hear, hears' of the House of Commons. He said to himself 'Ha, ha,' like the war-horse among the trumpets, and the thunder of the regiments; he shook himself together, and longed to be in

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among the crowds of workers, with the monstrosous music of the machinery in his ears.

'I shouldn't ha' listened to Joan!' he said to himself. 'That I shouldn't!'

The old lodge-keeper stared a moment or two, speechless at sight of him: it was the first working day after the Christmas holidays.

'If here bain't th' owd mester himsen! Aw'm right glad to see tha, mon!' exclaimed the lodge-keeper, as if he were himself the master, giving his hand to Suffield. 'Ee! but it'll set th' folk up to see yo'!'

'Thank you, John—thank you,' said Suffield, heartily shaking the hand of his old retainer. 'I'm just come down on a special matter o' business. My son, I suppose, left no word if he would be here to-day?'

'Mester George? Not he! He left no word wi' me.—But how's tha able to leave th' business o' th' country?—th' making o' Laws and Acts o' Parlyment and sech? How's things, mon? For we're as ignorant here as peas in a pod.'

'Well, John,' said Suffield, 'th' Queen has not axed me yet to be her Prime Minister; nor made yo', John, a Justice o' th' Peace.' And so he walked on, while John closed the gate, laughing to himself. 'Th' owd mester!' he murmured. 'He aye likes his joke. Nae much th' matter wi' a mon as can crack his joke.'

The old 'mester,' spite of having heavy stuff on his mind, could not refrain from giving himself the pleasure of a walk through the workrooms of the several buildings. It was agreeable to him—and it would have been instructive to a stranger—to see how all faces lighted up on beholding him, and how cheerily he was greeted by those whom he addressed, managers, foremen, or operatives: the abounding goodness of his nature touched them all.

'Who's in th' new building?' he asked of a manager at his elbow.

The manager answered that So-and-so was—a trustworthy person whom Suffield himself had left in charge.

'I'll go and have a look at it,' said he.

Arrived in the new building, where the special printing machines were at work, of the drawings for which Daniel Trichinopoly had made stolen copies, Suffield questioned the manager in charge: Where were the drawings kept? In the office, the man believed. Was that rule strictly carried out, that no one but those engaged in the building and sworn to secrecy should be admitted? It was. Had the manager ever seen Daniel Trichinopoly there? Never. Where were the keys kept? In the lodge with the other keys.—Suffield made little account of the last two answers; for he remembered that a year ago, when no one was supposed to be in the building or to be able to get into the building, Ainsworth had declared he had seen Daniel there.

Thence he went to the counting-house. The book-keepers and pen-men in general were not come yet; there were but that clerk who took the turn of early work, and an old woman dusting the desks. Suffield marched into the inner office, and up-stairs into the sanctum that used to be his own. He knew where the plans of the new machines had been wont to be kept. He went to the safe, of which he, as well as his son, carried a key, and opened a drawer: there were

the plans. He took them out and unrolled them on the table; he believed they looked dirtier, and they certainly bore marks of pencil-tracing. How could George have been so careless as allow the black Daniel opportunity to handle and use them?

He put the plans away—in the safe again—and then he sat down and thought. If the black Daniel had been able to play his own rig with these plans, what might he not have done with other things? George was palpably careless. There stood an Account Book left out; and there in a drawer was a key. There might be nothing of consequence in the drawer; nevertheless—Mr Suffield's business experience declared that a key neglected, for whatever reason, meant a weak link in security; and that a drawer left open was a temptation to open drawers. He went to the door and asked the clerk in the outer office, 'Does Trichinopoly come much here?'

'He's mostly up at the Hall with Mr George, and sometimes in the City,' answered the clerk.

In the City office, of course, thought Suffield—helping with the export to India and the Straits. He was about to lock the safe up again, with the resolution to go through everything carefully with George when that young gentleman should appear, when he noticed the cheque-book of the firm lying before him—a volume which was to most cheque-books as a folio is to a duodecimo. He took it out and began to look at it. As he read one counterfoil, and another, and another, he occasionally raised his head with an amazed air, and then resumed his scrutiny with contracted brows.

'I don't understand this, my lad,' he said at length. 'There's more here than I bargained for. But I must wait.'

So he resolutely closed the book, locked it up in the safe, and took his way to the Hall for breakfast. Tummus would gossip with 'th' owd mester,' but for all that, breakfast was soon set upon the table. His solitary meal did not encourage cheerful reflection. Why, he asked himself, was he sitting there alone? Had he been weak in humouring his wife, and giving himself up to the pursuit of parliamentary honour, and had he been precipitate in handing the entire control of his business over to his son? He thought it somewhat hard; but he saw that even at fifty a man must buy his experience like the most reckless youngster.

After breakfast he sat a while, and looked at the paper, and looked at the clock. At length he rose, went into the hall, summoned Tummus to brush his hat and coat, and set off to walk to the station, as aforetime, to take the train into town: perhaps, he thought, his son would go to the City first.

In the City office he found the manager and the clerks in their places, but no George. The manager, however, said that 'Mr George,' he believed, was in Liverpool on business, and would probably be back after lunch; so Suffield went forth into the City to see how the world of Lancashire commerce was moving: he had known nothing of that world, except from the newspapers and the gossip of his son, for a good many months. He went to the Athenæum and read the telegrams of news and of prices; and then he went on 'Change. He exchanged salu-

tations and he listened, and the more he listened the more bewildered he became; he overheard whispers about cotton, which—he was certain—were hushed or changed into another venue as he approached. One old acquaintance was franker with him.

'Well, George,' said he, 'what's the game to-day? It's ages since we've seen you here. Is it "futures" or "spot"? There's not much, you know, in the way of futures. They seem to be covered mostly by this rascal that's trying to "corner;" but, between you and me, George, I believe there's more than a Parsee or two in that corner: there's somebody behind them.'

'There is a corner, then, in cotton?' said Suffield.

'Is a corner?' echoed the acquaintance. 'But I forgot: you're only a Parliament man now. Well, there is a corner; and there isn't a corner: for, it remains to be seen if it can stand the January business. No man, not even Morris Ranger, can keep the market in a corner for ever. Speculation is a blessing, but not as some men speculate. This particular corner, I believe, George, is going to become an open square. There'll be another big arrival this week, and then we'll see.' And so the old acquaintance left him.

Suffield returned to the office, where he found his son busily hearing and speaking through the telephone. He nodded to his father, murmuring aside, 'I heard you had been here, dad,' and went on with his occupation. After a little while George hung up the telephone mouthpiece and sat down.

'And what,' he asked, 'has brought you down here, dad?'

'You haven't got M'Fie's letter, then?' said the elder. 'Where, my lad, is your Daniel Trichinopoly?'

'Where?' echoed George; and the father saw the son turn paler than he had ever known him.

'Let me tell you, my lad, so far as I know,' said Suffield; and recounted to his son the story of the Philosopher from the beginning to the end.

'Gone!—is he?' said George, gnawing his thumb, and evidently putting a constraint upon himself. 'With copies of the plans? He certainly ought to have been here to-day, and he is not! The scoundrel!—Wait a moment,' said he suddenly; 'I'll make an inquiry.'

He turned round to his writing-table and scribbled a note. He blew through a tube, and a clerk appeared. He handed the note sealed. 'Wait for an answer,' said he; 'and make as much haste as you can.'

When the clerk was gone he explained his action to his father. 'You know,' said he—'you remember I told you—that Daniel put that hundred Uncle Harry left him into the bank. He has been speculating with it, I believe, and made something more of it. If he is really gone, he'll have taken that with him.'

'Just so,' said his father. 'And it seems to me, George, my lad, that there must ha' been a deal of speculation going on inside the firm, for him to go against th' rule. When I was looking after the business myself I made it a rule—"No betting on horse-races or gambling in stocks

here!" I'd seen too much harm come o' them, and I had made up my mind that no man that betted or speculated was fit to serve wi' me. I did not think, my lad, o' saying ought like that to you when I put you in charge, because I thought you had a proper, straight, clear business head on you.'

'But, my dear dad,' said George, 'everybody speculates in these days: where's the harm in speculation?'

'The great harm in speculation, my lad,' said his father, with something like sternness, 'is that it makes you unfit for proper business. When I was a youngster I betted a sovereign on a horse; that sovereign became five; but what became of those five I never could tell: it was "lightly come, lightly go." And I said to myself, "We'll ha' no more o' this!" But harm or no harm, the thing for you is that it must be either business or speculation: the man isn't born yet that can do both properly. If he tries to do it, he comes a cropper with either the one or the other.—Hast thou been speculating?' he asked plainly.

'Well—yes, father,' answered George, much disquieted by the elder's direct question and uncompromising tone; 'I have.'

'Humph!' exclaimed his father; 'I'm disappointed in tha, lad.—Cotton, I suppose?'

'Yes, father; cotton.'

'Much?'

'Well—that depends upon what you might think much.'

'We'll go into that presently. I keep hearing about a corner in cotton: dost tha know ought o' that?'

'Yes; I know something of it.'

At that critical point the clerk returned and handed George a note.

'It is from the bank manager,' said he, when he had opened it. "'Mr Trichinopoly himself withdrew his account on December 22d." That's more than a week ago! It's the day he went for his holiday!'

'Drew the money and went off to London at once, I suppose,' said his father. 'Now, we'd better see that he hasn't drawn anything of ours.'

EILEAN DHU AND ITS FREQUENTERS.

As the advance of our so-called civilisation drives many of our rarer and more interesting 'uncivilised' friends farther and farther from ordinary ken, we seek to keep their images before us as they have recently appeared. So we drop down by boat towards the quaint and perverse island that is an epitome of a kingdom. A counterpart of a lion couchant in appearance, too, so it may be taken to represent the Scottish lion. It has at least a certain Scottish persistence in its character, and declines to be readily moulded under modern conditions. The Black-backed Gull is calling hoarsely as we approach, and circles around overhead with its many comrades; for this has long been a favourite haunt in the breeding season, and they know but too well, from increasing experience, that a boat bears only ene-

mies of their race. The nests are scattered about amongst the rocks and heath with the crudest of efforts after construction, and very embryonic attempts at concealment. The general colour of the eggs, and the very simplicity of the grass 'wisp' in a slight hollow, are indeed their greatest security. And this holds good with all its fellows about, whether Lesser Black-backed or Herring Gull. The piping Oyster-catcher, with its restless excitability and constant vociferations, dashes hither and thither, from shore to heathery knoll and back again, racing energetically along the beach after it drops upon it, and living in a mingled fool's paradise of having misled the intruder from its nest, and a purgatory of fear lest it should not have done so. If it only kept quiet, it would do better, as the eggs among the gravel of the beach are generally safe enough from an ordinary eye. What a row to be sure, as if all the world were after you! Your manners have not that repose that mark the proper aristocrat. You are only a wild-duck, startled out of your equanimity and your nest. There goes another with equal trepidation. They lie close, and conceal themselves and their nests dexterously, but beyond that they haven't an idea. In place of slipping through the heather and rising some distance off, they lose their heads, make all the row they can in their terror and surprise, and practically give up the game.

The rarer ducks we do not come upon in their accustomed haunts. Yet in these shallow holes under the fallen rocks the red-breasted Merganser, or Sawbill Duck, and even the Orange-bosomed Goosander, used to deposit their eggs, and trust to escaping the eyes of the enemy. But a greater and more ruthless enemy than man has too often found them out, and lived in too close proximity; for the Gray or Hooded Crow is too partial to eggs, and finds this mode of living so easy and agreeable, that it long made its nest in that aged elder-tree up amongst that débris of fallen rocks. Since our last raid upon it, as an enemy of rarity and beauty, it has shifted its nursery, but cannot be very far away. In its near vicinity were the nests of the brilliant Shel-drake, far under the larger stones, so as to be practically in burrows; yet they have not escaped the ravages of these gray rascals, and for once we do not startle a single Sheldrake to-day. Have these two ducks practically decided that it is of no use attempting to rear successors under the trying conditions, and left us thus so much the poorer? It looks very like it. Ha! here is one returning prodigal, we remark, as the Raven skulks along close to the top of the hill, and crosses the water in deadly fear and with indecent haste. It will not leave us long, however; and although it has not returned to the barrow-load of sticks on the rocky ledge, where it so long pre-empted the location, it has, like its gray congener, chosen a corner close by, but better hidden. The bold cragsman that invaded the sacred precincts behind that rocky ledge, when last it was so occupied, will never again disturb

your repose, and this year's progeny at any rate are practically safe to follow in your 'black but comely' footsteps. For a beautiful bird you are, although your ways are as dark as your sable plumes. The shepherd and the keeper are alike your deadly enemies. You have indeed, Mr Raven, no friend in feathers or in broadcloth, and to one and all appear as a type of the 'gentleman in black.'

But beautiful as you are in your glossy blues and blacks, how can you expect full consideration for your claims when you choose such very distinguished company? Just 'round the corner' on the higher part of the cliff, dwells, as it long has dwelt, the bold and beautiful Peregrine Falcon. I am grieved to think how many of the daring birds I have seen drop, never again to wing the empyrean from that rocky hold; yet, in despite of heavy losses and constant danger, there is a fascination in this bird-haunted island that enables the gay wooer of either sex soon to secure a new mate and continue the occupation. Like an old-time robber Highland chief in his eyrie, he or she, with such a point of vantage, will never fail of a mate; and is the world not made for the bold? How they flash out from the front of the cliff; and how we sympathise with the bold birds that have 'columbaria' in the cliff caves around a limited range, and seabirds at hand for a change, and duck for Sundays—without the green peas—and an occasional grouse for high-days and holidays. No wonder their wild 'keep' is always tenanted, despite periodic executions; for is not the female falcon the bolder and bigger and stronger of the two, and why should she hesitate to replace the slaughtered bride, at the prompt call of the bereaved widower, although in this the nesting season her risks are greater, and the demands of the young perforce draw her ever within the sphere of danger? With what pride she must look down over her domain, as she views her mate sweep back from the further shore across the intervening sea, his wings cleaving the air with a swift snap, and screeching gull or hoarse-voiced raven taking care to give it abundant sea-room.

The Kestrel, that used to nest on the other cliff, near the inquisitive rowan-tree, peering far over the ledge to watch the rare picnic parties that bivouacked beneath, has given up nesting apparently in this once happy isle, and has probably 'moved West.' Like the Yankee settler on the frontier, the place has got too civilised. Even the gay sea-swallows, that keep such good time in their advent, and are so wonderfully loyal to the place of their first choice, and in all probability the place of their birth, are beginning to thin off—or be thinned off! Is there no haven of rest to be left for those creatures that look askance at civilisation? Cannot we do something for our more bohemian brethren who love not the leash, the tether, or the hencoop? Do they not give us much in return for any little protection we can give them? What delight to view their displays of confident speed and power! What an insight into older conditions, that may yet one day be renewed conditions, when the cunning and the weak must give way to the bold and the strong, and the race again be to the swift. If we could but eliminate the hand of man from this natural gathering of rare creatures, what an

interesting study the island would provide us. In a ring-fence of greater security than Waterton's, with green to the very summit all the year, we have only to remove a few sheep or cattle to see the islet spring up into a forest of varied seedlings. Would the falcons increase then till they drove off their scared prey? Would the ducks increase and find shelter until the falcon dared not interfere? Would an internecine war take the place of the war with man, or would all settle down into a sort of recognised system of balance, in which too many of the 'stock' of the falcon would not be 'killed down,' and too many comrades would not be permitted to join in the foray? An over-accumulation of kinglets would not be likely, and each pair would keep its own rocky domain.

But the duck would revel in the deep undergrowth and heath; the gulls would hunt for the hidden nests and devour the eggs; the Grey Crow would consider that all these things were made by Heaven for its use! The Sheldrake, too, would return to the natural burrows; and the Sawbill utilise every suitable hollow. We should not have removed, perhaps we should have hardly lessened, the severity of the struggle for existence; but yet it would be less violent and artificial. Are we to be able to preserve the inhabitants of these spots where the rarer creatures gather; or will another ten years see as great a diminution of, and indeed, in some cases, disappearance of them, as the last decade has done? Will the otter still be able to green the turf near his lair; or would he decline to accept life under easy-going conditions, and seek some sterner scene of labour, should any protection be vouchsafed? There is so much that such an isle, under a kindly but observant eye, could tell us about; so much that we particularly wish to know about, that it seems a pity these little rendezvous for birds 'not generally known' should not be protected, in the interests of lovers of nature and of human nature!

ELSIE.

CHAPTER IV.—CONCLUSION.

WE were sorry when the vicar died, as he did in the following May, rather suddenly. I had reckoned on his joining our hands at midsummer, having a liking for his quiet impressiveness, so different from the sleepy automatism we had been accustomed to at Norton Priors. His reading of a burial would make all eyes wet; but, like April rain, there was a touch of sun in it, and the mourners went away easier at heart from the comfort he had given them. He had a way of joining happy couples which made the homeliest faces beautiful, for the sense that heaven itself had blessed them, and that there was no 'for worse' about it. And when the christenings came, he would turn every heart towards the little ones by his tenderness of way and the love for them beaming from his eyes.

Elsie was reminding me of these things, and telling how she came to admire and to work for him, as we walked in the lane the night of the funeral day. It was late, for she had been at a bedside at Nemoton till the 'bus had set out to meet the last up-train. I had been to the

funeral, and had seen Henry St John there, but was afraid to tell her so, and she avoided asking, though her thoughts must have turned to him many times, as she walked to and fro beside me talking gently of his father.

The moon rose big over Arbury Wood, yellowing to brighter gold as it mounted higher on its way; and I could see by its light the soft velvet of Elsie's eyes, and that something deep down in them which I could never fathom. I lost it as we turned for the last time and neared the mill; but as we stood beneath the privet arch leading to the garden, I saw it again, as she looked across to the moon dreamily.

'And yet there was a time,' said she, without turning her head, 'when I disliked the vicar almost to hatred. I thought him hard, and capable even of cruelty to any one who might stand in the way of any cherished wish or plan. He was'—

She shrank suddenly into the shadow of the arch, pulling me with her, and staring with wide eyes across at the stile of the croft. I looked too, and saw a tall dark figure approach it from the other side and lean on the top rail. And in the sheen of the moon I saw that it was Henry St John. Elsie trembled, and I could hear the quick thud, thud of her heart. A great ache grew to mine, and I was ready to groan when I looked across at the pale beauty of Henry's face as he gazed up at the house, thinking of Elsie. She was in my arms, and there was the man she loved.—Ah! the pain of it! For a moment my sight seemed to go; then a hot rage sent the blood round me, and I could have raised her up and hurled her across to him; but that, too, went off, and gave way to a mad sense of possession, which tightened my hold on her as she leaned heavily upon me. But she knew nothing of it, for, as I peered close at the pale oval of her face, I saw that her eyes were shut, and that her parted lips had lost their redness. I glanced back at the stile; but Henry was gone; then I laughed, and kissed Elsie's forehead passionately. Her lids quivered, and her eyes opened, staring absently up into mine, till memory came, and then she looked out again, trying gently to force herself from me.

'Let me go—how dare you!' she cried with sudden anger.

I loosed my hold, and stood still, the words ringing in my head strangely.

'Forgive me, George—I was hasty. I don't think I am quite well. Shall we say good-night?'

I said the word, and no more, and watched her glide away. But she turned again and ran back, and held her lips up for the kiss she had denied me. Could any man stand it? I caught her up and asked God to bless her always. And bless her He did in his own good way, though it was hard to see at the time that He had the handling of it.

For from that night Elsie was never the same to me. As our marriage day neared she appeared to lose all heart in things, all desire to say or do; and seemed no better than a parched lily that hangs its head in hopelessness. Her fresh comeliness left her; her face thinned down; and sometimes her eyes had in them a look like a spent deer when it falls and awaits the hounds at its

heels. I could bear it no longer, and saying nothing to any one, set out for London to where Henry St John had gone the day after the funeral. It was Saturday night when I arrived; but I traced him on the following morning to a big church in the suburbs, where I saw him in his vestments, assisting in the service. I sat till it was over, and then sought him at the Clergy House, as they called it, adjoining the church.

As simply as I could, I told him how things were—that he must marry Elsie, and not I. He listened quietly, his face a shade paler, and his blue eyes softening and hardening by turns. When I had done, he got on his feet, and paced up and down in a troubled way. I sat still, feeling very rough and coarse in such a fine room and beside such a man. He sat down again, and now I saw that his eyes had hardened and remained so. In a slow, deliberate way, he began to explain how he was placed; that out of love of his father, and a strong predilection for the work of his Church, he had resolved to devote himself to it, and to make no other ties. He had doubted the sincerity of Elsie's refusal, but had accepted it, from pride partly that he should be refused, and out of fear that he might for ever estrange himself from his parent by persisting in his suit. He had now reason to suspect that his father had seen Elsie, and prevailed upon her, by forcible arguments, to refuse him. I might have made this clear to him, but held my tongue, and let him go on, which he did eloquently, and with much good sense from his point of view.

But I thought of Elsie, and struck in impatiently. 'Sir,' said I, 'you can no more love mankind without first loving some one about you, than you can make a wheel without a hub. God made you two for each other, as He made the laws which show that every man can work better under the chastening influence of a good woman and of the home she hallows, than without such aid. But whether celibacy be right or not for one in your calling doesn't affect the duty before you. You have made Elsie love you, and you will mar, if not ruin her own life unless you take her to you and give her the loving support of yours. Man! man!—can you hesitate? Why, she's worth a thousand of you!'

'So she is, Crannock,' said he quietly and without offence at my outburst; 'and you don't know how your words try my fealty to the mission I have taken up.—Leave me; let me think it over; but don't hope. I may not lightly forswear principles such as mine. Go; and in a few days you or she shall hear from me, according as my decision shapes.'

And so I left him, and made my way to Norton Priors, which I reached after three days' absence. It surprised me to find the shop shut and nothing going on; but Dobson, across at the mill, seeing me staring about, walked over and made it clear. Jem and two of his children were down with typhoid fever; and Mrs Onslow had just sent for the doctor to see to Elsie, who had been sitting up with the little ones all night and had gone home feeling queer herself.

It was true enough; and in twenty-four hours Elsie was tossing about in her bed, delirious. I hung about the house, unable to do a thing, as

day followed day and she got lower and lower in the grip of the fever. It went to my heart to see her wasted face and her great eyes flaming so from their sockets, while her poor mad talk about Henry St John and the love she bore him nearly sent me mad too. But she got so weak at last that she could do no more than whisper, and that but seldom; and one night her mother and the doctor and I were all in the room together, expecting her to go every minute.

I had sent a telegram to Henry, telling him the news, and leaving it to himself to come or not as he liked. It was now past midnight, and the last bus had glided over the tan an hour ago, as I had seen from the open window. But while the minutes went on, and we sat saying nothing, a sound was borne in to my ears which set my pulse at the double. It was the faintest of sounds, hardly discernible above the hushed voice of the weir; but it drew nearer and nearer, till we could all hear the horse as it galloped its hardest towards us. It was muffled a minute as it came through Arbury Wood; but again the hoofs rang out, and in another three minutes were echoing like thunder in the quiet of the village. I looked from the window, and saw the horse on its haunches as the rider pulled up and leaped from the saddle. He saw my face at the casement, and I remember his breathless cry as he looked wildly up:

'Is she alive?—Elsie!—I've come to see her. Let me in, for God's sake!—She must not die!'

His voice rang into the room with odd effect on us all. Elsie heard it, and made a slight movement, murmuring his name. Then she breathed a faint little sigh; and the doctor bent his head anxiously, as if he feared her heart had stopped. But no—it was beating steadily; and he looked up with a light in his eyes, saying in a whisper that Elsie was saved.

I met Henry on the stairs, and told him what he had done. His head sank on my shoulder, and he wept like any girl. And I couldn't blame him, for my own eyes were wet, and my heart ready to split with its gladness. In such moments we do strange things, and what did I do then but kiss Henry on the temple, feeling drawn to him irresistibly. He had saved Elsie; and she loved him, and had every right to love him, comely as he was, and so tender-hearted.

I carried on the mill for a year or two after that, and was always glad to hear news of their happiness away in Hampshire, where they had settled. But I sold the old place to Higgins at last, and the carpentering to a brother of Dobson's; for poor Jem was in the churchyard along with his young ones—and then I went Winchester way to say good-bye. It was then I had my last sight of Elsie as she sat in the Rectory garden, making some tiny clothes, with soft hope in her eyes and gladness. And because she was happy, so was I; and they all thought, as they should, that I was not much the worse for my loss. So I came out to Melbourne, and let time and hard work soften it down to one of those might-have-beens which we solitaries muse of when the pipe is alight and old faces shape in the curl of the smoke.

Sweet Elsie! She has gone her way long syne, as tender things will; but she remembered me

at the last, and sent me a braid of her hair, with a sisterly word or two and a blessing, to which Henry added, 'God's will be done!' And so it all came back at the sound of the fiddle; and when I asked the lady what she'd been playing, she said it was Schubert's 'Adieu de Béranger.'

THE 'REDEMPTIONERS.'

'THE cruelty of our laws against debtors, without distinction of honest or dishonest, is the shame of our nation. I am persuaded the honestest man in England, when by necessity he is compelled to break, will early fly out of the kingdom rather than submit. To stay here—this is the consequence: as soon as he breaks, he is proscribed as a criminal, and has thirty to sixty days to surrender both himself and all that he has to his creditors. If he fails to do it, he has nothing before him but the gallows, without benefit of clergy. If he surrenders, he is not sure but he shall be thrown into jail for life by the Commissioners only on pretence that they doubt his oath. What must the man do? If he carries away his effects, he is a knave, and cheats his creditors. If he stays here, he is starved in a jail, and must end his days by a lingering death.'

Thus wrote Daniel Defoe. In his time, debtors were frequently compelled, in seeking means to extricate themselves from their embarrassments, to consent to anything, if they thereby could avoid the horrors of the debtors' prison. In many cases they took advantage of a custom that, in one form or another, had the sanction of antiquity, and being generally able-bodied men, they placed themselves in the hands of some merchant or agent, who, having effected an arrangement with the creditors, took possession of the unfortunate debtors, and hurrying them to the nearest seaport, shipped them abroad, generally to Virginia or Maryland, as so much merchandise. Sometimes the dealer accompanied his cargo, in order, if possible, to obtain a better price at the end of the voyage.

Arrived at their destination, the captives—to give them their real name—were sold to any planter whose offer would recoup the agent for the sum he had expended in purchase and transit and also allow him a handsome profit. By the terms of this sale the captive was bound to serve his new master for several years, his liberty being nominally secured at the end of that period; and from the hope of redemption and deliverance thus held out to him, the term 'Redemptioner' came to be applied to these unfortunates. But any hopes that the Redemptioner might cherish of his ultimate liberation soon proved fallacious, and he found himself plunged into fresh embarrassments long before his period of servitude had expired. Charges were made upon him for clothing, for tobacco, even for the necessities of life—charges which he had no means of meeting, however good his inclination; and too late he found that he had, in fact, become a slave, without money, without rights, and without hope. Such friends as he had were in England, and probably had forgotten him altogether; perhaps, if even they remembered him, they were without the means of assisting him.

And the chance of money reaching the individual for whom it was intended was in those days very small. Pacific railways and 'ocean greyhounds' were unknown in the 'good old times,' and communication was slow and insecure.

Some of these Redemptioners were of course more fortunate than others, and had friends and connections more powerful and more kindly disposed, and such often ultimately obtained their freedom. But these were the exception, and not the rule, and, generally speaking, the unhappy victim laboured on from year to year, his 'redemption' receding farther and farther into the distance, till at last death put an end to his sufferings.

The dealers and merchants who carried on this shameful traffic combined the functions of the modern debt collector and the emigration agent, and traded chiefly from Belfast and Londonderry to Maryland and Virginia, though there also was a brisk trade done from Holland and Germany to the above-named colonies. These dealers were usually known as 'White Guinea Men.' They had often heavy losses, arising from the crowded state of the vessels in which the captives were conveyed; but the gains were very large, and the traffic consequently continued to flourish. On one occasion, in 1793, the yellow fever broke out in Baltimore, and no domestic servants or 'helps' could be obtained, owing to the very natural and prevalent dread of the disease. But a 'White Guinea Man' arriving from Germany, and hearing of the 'plague,' and also that no nurses were to be had in the city, conceived the idea of doing a good stroke of business, and at the same time getting rid of his cargo of Redemptioners and other deluded and trepanned emigrants. Sailing up to the city, he made known that he had 'at a good price, a few healthy servants, generally between seventeen and twenty-one years of age. Their time will be disposed of by applying on board this brig.' No doubt he reaped an excellent harvest, but one might be pardoned for hoping that he himself did not escape without a touch of 'Yellow Jack.'

The Redemptioners proper were, of course, not the only unfortunates who wore out hope and life upon the plantations of Virginia and Maryland. There were also the victims of the nefarious 'kidnappers,' men who amassed money through the credulity of intending emigrants, especially of those of the poorer class, to whom the country to which they were bound was veritably 'an unknown land.'

We have not quite rid ourselves of this species of kidnappers in these days, if we may judge by occasional revelations in police courts with regard to some emigration agents; and it will be readily understood that if such deceptions and frauds are possible now, they could be practised much more readily then.

These kidnappers had their regularly-appointed agents and offices, and a contemporary writer refers to these as follows: 'That house which they there are entering is an office where servants for the plantations bind themselves to be miserable as long as they live, without a special Providence prevents it. These fine fellows, who look like footmen upon a holiday, crept into cast suits of their masters', that want quality with deportment answerable to their apparel, are

kidnappers who walk the 'Change and other parts of the town in order to seduce people who want services, and young folks crost in love, and under an unsuccessful mind to go beyond the seas, getting so much a head of masters of ships and merchants who go over for every wretch they trepan into this misery.'

Others, too, there were among these 'white slaves' sharing their hard fate and fare, their desperate and hopeless condition, men who had been in their time in a good social position in England, but who, by some strange and unexpected reverse of fortune, an unsuccessful conspiracy, a lost battle, had been placed at the mercy of the ruling powers. Nor these alone; many others, upon whom sentence had been passed, found themselves doomed to the life-long misery of the plantations; and the gallant soldier, the desperate adventurer, the deluded emigrant, the hardened criminal, all met a common fate.

There was also a regular trade in ordinary household servants, whose condition was superior to that of the Redemptioner, in that it was to some extent regulated by special enactments. Conditional servitude, indeed, under indentures or covenants, had long existed in Virginia. Men were transported there at an expense of eight pounds or so, and were sometimes sold for forty, or fifty, or even sixty pounds. The supplying of 'white servants' became a regular business; and a class of dealers arose in England, nicknamed 'Spirits,' who sought to persuade young people to embark for America as for a land of plenty. In fact, they were sold in England, to be resold in Virginia.

In the colonies, the average price, about the year 1672, for white servants bound for five years was ten pounds or so; but for negroes, twenty to twenty-five pounds. According to the Virginia State Laws, these servants, after their term had expired, could not legally leave their employment without their masters' certificate. If, however, they did so, any one harbouring them or giving them shelter was fined thirty pounds' weight of tobacco for every day and night they were so harboured.

Any pursuit after runaway servants was made at the public expense. If the master would not pay the charges, the local authorities sold or hired out the servant, when captured, to recoup themselves.

Another regulation was that no minister should marry any servants unless he had a certificate from both masters that they fully consented. If he disregarded this prohibition, and performed the ceremony, he was liable to a penalty of ten thousand pounds' weight of tobacco.

Time went by, and at last, though very gradually, public opinion in America took a healthier and a higher tone. The condition of the Redemptioner and his fellow-sufferers began to be inquired into, and in some respects ameliorated. It was enacted in Maryland, in 1817, that there should be in future an official in every port to register the apprenticeship of servants, or the engagement of Redemptioners and other emigrants. Unless drawn up and secured by this official, no agreement was considered binding. Minors were not allowed to be sold, excepting by their parents or next of kin, an exception that seems odd, to say the least of it. Certainly,

the 'incurable' lads and lasses of those days must have been much more readily dealt with than they are at present. There is, in fact, a *cause célèbre* upon record in the year 1743, in which one James Annesley claimed the earldom of Anglesey from his uncle, who, he alleged, had caused him to be kidnapped and sold at thirteen years of age. He gained the case and the estates, but did not press for the title, a barren honour, which the uncle continued to hold until he died.

The new regulations were in the main beneficial, though they were, of course, often evaded in various ways, chiefly by bribing the Government official. Failing this, they were now and again openly broken through.

As with the later trade in negroes, the profits were too large for the traffic to be lightly relinquished, and it was not till the beginning of the present century that it eventually died out through the spread of free emigration.

Black slavery has always had its defenders, and no doubt white servitude was not less fortunate. Yet it seems amazing that such a state of things could ever have been permitted in a civilised country, and that custom and law, both in England and America, could ever have promoted and sanctioned the institution of the Redemptioners.

CURIOUS SHOWERS.

In August last year the inhabitants of Bjelina, in Bosnia, were treated to a rather unusual meteorological phenomenon in the shape of a shower of fish which accompanied a severe thunder-storm from the north-west. The strangest part of the occurrence was that the fish were alive and resembled whittings, and that they were caught in the gutters by the children, and brought in by wondering peasants from the fields, meadows, and high-roads. Possibly, had there been scarcity in the neighbourhood, this curious shower would have been hailed as a direct intervention of Providence on behalf of the inhabitants; but, as there seems to have been no distress, there is no knowing what they thought of it, though it goes without saying that they attributed it to any cause but a natural one. As a matter of fact, the visitation, though comparatively rare, is explicable on perfectly natural grounds. The fish were undoubtedly taken up into the air by a water-spout, carried along by atmospheric currents, and dropped, as it happened, over the village of Bjelina. They had not been held 'in suspension,' so to speak, for long, because the fish were alive when they fell to the ground.

But mere distance from a large expanse of water does not count, for these fish-showers are known to have occurred many hundreds of miles away from the nearest coast. In South America, some years ago, a tract of country forty-three miles square was found thick with fish; and—to omit a host of other such instances abroad—in England on at least one occasion some pasture-land a considerable distance from the sea was found strewn with bushels of small fishes. We know ourselves of a shower of fish-bones which

fell only last year in the heart of Wales. Such showers are frequent enough at sea, and every sailor can tell of their occurrence. Mariners can also tell of showers of dust, of small animals, or of plants falling upon their vessels thousands of miles out on the ocean. These are explained on much the same principle as the fish-showers on land, with the substitution of a sandspout for a waterspout.

Mud-showers and frog-showers, of which we hear rather frequently, are caused in the same way. M. Peltier has put a frog-shower on record as having happened within his own experience. He speaks of seeing the frogs fall on the roofs of the houses, and rebound from thence on to the pavement below. A mud-shower occurred along the Union Pacific Railway at Onaga on the 4th of April 1892. The rain, we are assured, commenced early in the day, and soon the south and east sides of all the houses were covered with yellow clay. A Union Pacific train which ran through the storm had its windows covered; and the head-light was so completely plastered that the light was shut in, and the train ran in darkness into Rossville, where the mud had to be scraped off. As far east as Topeka the windows showed that the edge of the mud-storm had extended this far. It is said to have been even more severe fifty miles north-west.

Blood rain and black rain are only varieties of this phenomenon. Of the latter, we hear nothing worth speaking of nowadays; but an almost historic shower of this sort fell at Montreal in the earlier part of this century, and enveloped the then youthful city in a black pall, which must have been worse than a prime London fog, seeing that it gave the inhabitants the idea that the last day had come, or was at least on the point of coming. 'Blood' rain is caused by the presence of infinitely little plants, animalcules, or minerals in the globules. In one instance of a shower that fell at Bristol and in the Bristol Channel, the analytical examination showed that the red colour was due to ivy-berry seeds. In mediæval times, blood rain was a prodigy; in the East it was connected with the belief that man was produced from blood that fell from heaven.

It was a portent as remarkable as the 'bloody host,' which, while it flourished, probably caused the death of more Jews in this country than any other individual superstition directed against that people. It is described as 'an appearance of blood flowing from bread when bitten;' but it manifested itself in other articles of food besides bread, and sometimes seemed to drop from the air. It will be remembered by historical readers that while Alexander was besieging Tyre, this prodigy and the other one of 'blood rain' occurred in one day, much to the consternation of the soldiers.

More curious than blood rain in regard to the mere colour was the red, violet, and grass-green shower which fell in the south of France many years ago, and made a patchwork of the big lake, whereon its manifestation was the more noticeable. This shower, again, was caused by untold myriads of differently-coloured animalcules.

Spider-showers are another curiosity worthy of mention in this connection. The spiders are gossamers; and all those who have read White's

Natural History of Selborne will call to mind his description of the showers he observed. One of these, he tells us, continued for nearly a whole day, and the gossamers descended from a surprising height; for when one gentleman ascended a hill near at hand, some three hundred feet high, he found that the spiders were dropping from a region in the atmosphere that was still beyond the reach of his gaze. Dr Martin Lister named this aerial spider 'the bird,' from the facility with which it can traverse the air; and upon one occasion, when he observed a shower of them at York, he ascended to the top of the Minster, and found that even at that altitude he was still below their level—that they were descending from some region above that standpoint. Darwin, another observer of spider-showers, describes one which he saw in 1832, when on board the *Beagle*, at the mouth of the La Plata River, when the vessel was some sixty miles from land; and he seems to have been the first to notice that each parachute of gossamer carried a spider aëronaut, for he not only observed them arrive on board the ship, but he also saw them reproduce a new parachute, and on this frail bark launch forth again 'on the bosom of the palpitating air.'

These gossamer showers are great mysteries, and once seen, cannot very readily be forgotten; for the air on these occasions becomes literally crowded with the tiny parachutes mentioned, which are composed of a few threads of almost invisible gossamer, with a small but lively spider attached. This may be regarded as the most beautiful thing in strange showers.

The most marvellous, perhaps, is manifested in the way of hail-showers—that is, if we are to take for truth all we hear on this head. There is no reason in the world to doubt the assertion that hailstones, like rain, have been known to fall from a perfectly cloudless sky. But those of little faith may very well doubt the stories that have been told about the size of the stones themselves. Bluish hailstones weighing one hundred pounds each are said, by Count de Mezeray, to have fallen in Italy in the year 1510. Hailstones 'as big as a man's fist' are almost as common as potatoes. A storm that occurred in 1809 is said to have broken over two hundred thousand panes of glass in London alone; and in Hertfordshire, another storm is reported to have caused the death of several people. Blocks of ice weighing four and a half pounds fell at Cazorla, in Spain, on June 5, 1829; and in the south of France, in October 1844, other blocks fell which turned the scale at eleven pounds.

THE CHINESE BARBER.

THE services of the *teto-yen*, or Barber, are in constant request in China, and a much more extended and complicated process is gone through than is the case at our English hair-dresser's, whose operations are generally limited to hair-cutting and clean-shaving. Having settled his customer comfortably in his chair, the Chinese barber commences by scraping, not only the cheeks and chin of his victim, but also the whole of his head, with the exception of one spot

on the top of his cranium, from which sprouts the inevitable queue; this is called by the Chinese *pien-tsi*, and by us commonly pigtail, a name much resented by the Chinaman as a vulgar and insulting designation of the 'sacred lock.' Having succeeded in shaving carefully round the pigtail, leaving the head in a bright and shining condition, resembling a well-polished billiard ball, the barber begins to perform upon his customer in a manner which can only be adequately described as 'punching his head.' This is done by clenching his fist and dealing to the long-suffering patient several sharp taps or punches with the tips of his knuckles, varied by a process of kneading or pounding, the barber digging his knuckles into the ill-fated headpiece of his customer in a most merciless fashion, suggesting that the operator is some philanthropic but fanatical phrenologist who is seeking to improve the character of his subject by altering the undulations of his skull and changing the relative positions of his 'bumps.'

The reason for these eccentric actions on the part of the Celestial barber is that his customer finds—or imagines that he finds—his brain cleared and his mind relieved; worry, care, depression, and dullness dispersed, and a feeling of lightness, brightness, and vivacity induced. As he is probably just recovering from the depressing and enervating effects of an opium stupor, with its strange and dreamful delirium, this result is not undesirable if business has to be transacted, in which, by the way, the Chinaman usually displays quite as much shrewdness and ability as our own merchant or tradesman.

After the punching and pounding process is concluded, the barber at once proceeds to unfasten and unplat the long tail of hair, which reaches to the ankles of the wearer, and having combed, brushed, and begreased it—much after the fashion of the long-tressed maiden of to-day—he, with slow and assiduous carefulness, replaits it, and ties it with a piece of black braid which hangs in two short tails at the end.

By this time one would think that sheer exhaustion would prevent the pitiless and persecuting barber from committing further atrocities upon the person of his mild and lamb-like subject; but no; renewed activity possesses the ruthless, unrelenting hair-dresser, and with frantic energy he seizes the hands of his victim, pulls his arms behind, and commences to twist and turn them until every joint cracks, and one would think that his shoulders must be dislocated. The muscles of the arms are next the objects of attack, and the kneading and pounding process is again gone through, then the fingers are bent backwards, the finger-bones crack again, and all the tortures of the rack appear to be endured.

Thus the operations of the tonsorial artist are concluded, he is duly remunerated, and the Chinaman walks lightly out of the shop, feeling

himself refreshed and invigorated; the Englishman staring with undisguised astonishment at the discovery that life still lingers in the body of his Celestial brother.

THE RETURN OF TANĒ.

[These lines are based on the customs and superstitions of the Maoris, or aboriginal race of New Zealand. They placed great faith in their native priests, who professed to divine the future, and at times to communicate with the dead. The last verse refers to the Maori custom of leaving their dead upon some mountain which was so sacred as to render any intrusion fatal. Mt. Tarawera, the scene of the dreadful eruption of 1886, was one of those holy mountains of burial, the Maoris having carried their dead there for fifteen generations.]

At the set of the sun from the pa* of Maroa
Strode TanĒ the chief.
On the red-wrathful brow of him, TanĒ the Toa,†
Like a wind-shaken leaf
Shook the huia‡ feather.

'Ye have offered me shame. Like the puia's§ fountain,
My soul surges o'er.
The pa of Maroa, the lake and the mountain
Shall know me no more
Till the earth meets the heavens!'

Loud murmured the people: 'Be eyes to our blindness,
Tuhotu the priest!
Shall TanĒ the loved one revisit in kindness,
When his anger has ceased,
The land of his fathers?'

Tuhotu the aged, who speaks the dark meaning
Of shade-dwelling dead,
Looking over his staff as he totters in leaning,
Saith, bowing the head,
'He shall, and he shall not!'

Many a moon on the pa of Maroa
Has flitted away;
And the multitude gathers, for TanĒ the Toa
Comes hither to-day,
And the breach is healed over.

But how cometh TanĒ? Slow rowers are rowing.
O'er brown neck and breast
The red blood of mourning on sharp shell is flowing:
The dark word is guessed
Of the Seer Tuhotu.

He comes to Maroa. The tempest shall whiten
His bones on the hill—
The Mountain of Dread where the forked fires lighten
Profaners to kill—
But his soul is in Reinga.||

JESSIE MACKAY.

* Pa, a fortified Maori village.

† Toa, great chief.

‡ Huia, a New Zealand pigeon, whose feathers were worn by chiefs only.

§ Puia, New Zealand geyser.

|| Reinga, the Maori heaven.